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RHMFSS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000841

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA, S/P
IO FOR A/S SILVERBERG AND PDAS WARLICK
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/KUMAR/PHEE
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/03/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR FAID UNSC LE SY IR

SUBJECT: LEBANON: HARIRI WITH S/P GORDON WARNS AGAINST THE DANGERS OF IRAN AND SYRIA

REF: BEIRUT 713

BEIRUT 00000841 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Meeting with visiting Director of Policy Planning David Gordon on June 3, majority leader Saad Hariri stressed that Iran, with help from Syria, is taking over Lebanon. He added that it is imperative that the U.S. formulate a strong, coherent policy on Syria that stresses sticks as much as it does carrots. Saad also discussed the Sunni mindset after last month's fighting in Lebanon, a future trip by President Sleiman to Washington, the urgent need for Israeli withdrawal from Shebaa Farms, and U.S. assistance to Lebanon. Following the lunch, we learned that Saad, unexpectedly, will not include independent Tripoli MP Mosbah Ahdab in the next cabinet. End summary.

¶2. (C) Policy Planning Director David Gordon and S/P officers Todd Deatherage and Whitley Wolman, accompanied by the Charge, Special Assistant, Pol/Econ Chief, ConOffs, and senior LES political advisor, met with majority leader Saad Hariri at his office in Qoreitem on June 3. Hariri advisors Ghattas Khoury, Hani Hammoud, Nader Hariri, notetaker Nadine Chehab and independent Tripoli MP Mosbah Ahdab also attended the meeting.

IRANIAN TENTACLES ALL OVER LEBANON

¶3. (C) After thanking the U.S. for its continued support, Saad said that the next few months will be critical for Lebanon. As he has stressed previously, Iran has "put its hand on Lebanon" and created a new political atmosphere in the country. He noted that Iran is pouring money and weapons into its surrogates in Lebanon, and recently Hassan Nasrallah publicly stated that he is an adherent to velayat-e-faqih (Persian concept of Islamic supremacy). Saad asserted that Iran has a grand strategy in the region, with Iran's ultimate goal the extension of its border next to Israel's. Saad recounted a recent comment by Iran's Foreign Minister, who told Saad in their May 26 meeting that this was Lebanon's last war with Israel, implying an impending end to the

Israeli state.

¶4. (C) Commenting on the 2009 parliamentary elections, Saad remarked that if Iran thinks March 14 will win, then it will do something to prevent the elections from taking place. Saad cautioned that the 2009 parliamentary elections will be the most important in Lebanon's history and will decide what type of country Lebanon will become.

¶5. (C) Director Gordon responded to Saad's concerns by saying that the U.S. was indeed concerned about Iran and that the Iranian issue would remain the biggest challenge in the next administration. Gordon also noted that the U.S. is working with partners in the region and at the UN Security Council to counter Iranian actions. He added that U.S. was committed to building up the security and civil institutions in Lebanon as a counterpoint to Iranian's influence of instability.

US POLICY TOWARD SYRIA

¶6. (C) Saad then switched to Syria, accusing the U.S. of having "no policy". He added that the only reason Iran is such a big challenge in the region is because of Syrian help; it is Syria that allows weapons and money to be transported from its